

FALLING WATER FALLS
CLASS I SCENIC-RECREATIONAL STATE NATURAL AREA

COUNTY: Hamilton

7.5' QUADRANGLE: Fairmount

PHYSIOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: Cumberland Plateau

OWNERSHIP: State of Tennessee

ACREAGE: 132 acres

YEAR DESIGNATED: 1973

DESCRIPTION: Falling Water Falls is a 136-acre natural area in Hamilton County. It is named for the 110' high waterfall on Little Falling Water Creek that drops over the resistant sandstone cap of the Cumberland Plateau. It plunges into the Falling Water Gorge, tumbling over cascades and passing large moss covered boulders, before joining the Big Falling Water Creek in Pickett Gulf. The small cliff top section of the natural area is in the town of Walden while most of the natural area is located below the falls in Soddy Daisy.

The vertical cliffs of the escarpment with its rugged, steep, rocky slopes appear in stark contrast to Falling Water Falls Gorge. The gorge is sheltered and stays moist with mist coming from the falls and cascades during most of the year. The sound of the big falls and the cascading whitewater below drowns out adjacent urban noise that might spoil the mood of this primitive and uniquely beautiful area. The area is home to a second growth hardwood forest comprised of oak-hickory and mixed mesophytic forest communities. There is an oak-pine forest on the drier parts of the natural area, particularly above the falls. Mountain laurel and rosebay rhododendron are common. Falling Water Falls supports a great diversity of plant and animal life including a small population of the federally endangered large-flowered skullcap (*Scutellaria montana*).

This diversity of forestland near a large urban area gives the area even greater significance. A scenic vista of the Tennessee River Valley, Pickett Gulf and Buzzard Point exists at the top of the falls above the 840-foot-high escarpment. Far below, Levi Cave is located at the base of the escarpment slope. A small two-foot wide hole leads down into a 750-foot-long cave consisting of several large rooms and dripstone formations.

SITE MANAGEMENT: Town of Walden, P.O. Box 335, Signal Mountain TN 37377-0335, phone (423) 886-4362; Division of Natural Areas, 401 Church Street, 7th Floor L&C Annex, Nashville, TN 37243, phone (615) 532-0431; Division of Natural Areas – East TN Office, 3711 Middlebrook Pike, Knoxville, TN 37921, phone (865) 594-5601.

PUBLIC ACCESS: Limited public access is provided. A small parking area is located off Forest Park Drive on the top of the escarpment. A short trail leads to the falls and a commanding view of the Tennessee Valley. The valley portion of the natural area is accessed off Levi Rd. in Soddy Daisy, but currently there is no developed parking area here.

DIRECTIONS: Falling Water Falls is located 10 miles north of downtown Chattanooga partly within the Town of Walden. North of Signal Mountain on Hwy 127 turn on Fairmount Pike at Fairmount Orchard. At the first stop sign bear right onto Key Hulse Street. Go straight through the four-way stop onto Lake St. Take a left onto Ivory Ave., and then bear right on Chestnut St. Go straight onto Forest Park Ave for about two miles to the parking area.